

The Social Security Administration's Disability Case Processing System

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Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To evaluate the Social Security Administration's (SSA) plans to complete the Disability Case Processing System (DCPS) project.

Background

SSA partners with State disability determination services (DDS) to evaluate disability claims and make disability determinations. SSA intends for DCPS to simplify DDS system support and maintenance by transitioning to a case processing system that provides common functionality and consistent support to each DDS. According to the Agency, DCPS will also improve the speed and quality of the disability process and reduce the overall growth rate of infrastructure costs.

In March 2014, SSA contracted with a consultant to conduct an independent analysis of the DCPS project. The consultant delivered its report in June 2014. The report indicated that SSA invested \$288 million in DCPS over 6 years, but the project delivered limited functionality and faced schedule delays as well as increasing stakeholder concerns.

On July 25, 2014, we received a letter from Representative Sam Johnson, Chairman, Subcommittee on Social Security, House Committee on Ways and Means, requesting that we review DCPS.

Our Findings

SSA has taken steps to get DCPS on track. For example, SSA

- designated a single accountable executive for the project and reorganized DCPS staff into a new Chief Program Office;
- established teams to ensure DDS staff is more involved in developing and testing DCPS; and
- prioritized known functional limitations with the software and shifted resources to focus on resolving existing problems.

In the near-term, SSA plans to

- evaluate its contracting options to ensure project risks are shared with vendors;
- perform a new, comprehensive cost-benefit analysis for the project; and
- release a new version of DCPS that will address nearly 200 outstanding issues.

SSA is determining whether off-the-shelf software or a modernized version of existing SSA-owned software can be integrated into DCPS and, if so, what the associated implementation costs would be. However, while those evaluations are underway, the Agency is developing its custom-built solution.

Conclusions

SSA has taken steps to help get the project on track and ensure its successful completion. However, we believe SSA should suspend the development of certain custom-built components of DCPS until it has completed its evaluations and determined whether off-the-shelf or modernized SSA-owned software are viable alternatives.

The successful delivery of DCPS will require diligent oversight by Agency management and unified strategic decisions. SSA must ensure it has a process to monitor progress, identify issues timely, and take corrective action. In addition, the Agency should keep key stakeholders—including congressional committees and the Inspector General—informed of the project's status. We plan to continue monitoring SSA's progress as the DCPS project moves forward.